



Andrew J. Frauenhoffer
Executive Director



insider

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Ronald J. Murphy
Deputy Executive Dir.

Perry County JobSight Helps Iraq Veteran Start New Business, New Life *By Michael Cornett, EKCEP, Inc.*

Jason Combs walked into the Perry County JobSight workforce center in April battle-scarred, depressed, and out of work. He walked out with a positive outlook and the tools he needed to launch his own business.

Jason, an Army sergeant from Knott County, had been wounded in a July 2004 roadside bomb attack on his tank in Baghdad, Iraq. He was the only survivor of the attack.

After recuperating in Germany, he received an honorable discharge. Jason, 32, had just returned to America when he visited the JobSight, operated by the L.K.L.P. Community Action Council at Jeff, just south of Hazard on KY 15. The physical and emotional scars he brought home left him uncertain of how to resume a normal life and find a career after nearly seven years in the military, he said.

“Once I returned home, I sort of hoped I could get a job in the mines or something,” Jason says. “But I came to the JobSight, and a lot more doors were opened for me that I wasn’t expecting.”

Jason says the person responsible for opening many of those doors is Chris Ward, a Local Veterans Employment Representative (LVER) with the Kentucky Office for Employment and Training (OET), a key partner in the JobSight network. Chris, also an Army veteran, recalls that Jason only intended to apply for Unemployment Insurance (UI) when he first visited the JobSight.

“At the time, he was totally unaware of any other benefits besides UI that he was entitled to as an honorably discharged veteran,” Chris says.

Jason says Chris “opened up a big book” to him, informing him of numerous benefits and services offered by Veterans Affairs and the other agencies that are

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Thankful for angels, WWII vet praises those who share, *by Judy Jenkins,* *Gleaner staff, Tuesday, Dec. 5, 2006*

(Reprinted with the permission of The Gleaner)

Charlie Chancellor observed an anniversary Monday [December 4, 2006], but it wasn't the kind that's celebrated with cake and punch.

Instead, it was a time of reflection for the World War II veteran who turns 85 two days after Christmas and is one of the 70 or so men and women represented on the Veterans Angel Tree at the local Office of Employment and Training.



Photo by Darrin Phegley, the Gleaner

Charles Chancellor, a WWII veteran, is one of many names on the Veteran's Angel Tree at the local employment office. Chancellor, who will be 85 this month was in the Army infantry 95th division in a machine gun squad. At right is a portrait of him when he was 24 years old in 1946 and several medals including the Purple Heart and Bronze Star.

On Dec. 4, 1944, Chancellor was the sole survivor of a direct hit by a German artillery shell that

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OET helps feed homeless veterans

OET, in partnership with the Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program (HVRP), recently completed its second annual food drive to feed homeless veterans. This year OET had help collecting from Veterans of Foreign Wars, the Commonwealth Office of Technology and Campbellsville Apparel.



Left to right, Rick Netherton, Veterans Employment and Training in Kentucky; Joe Clemons, representing the VFW; Claudia Blaylock, Volunteers of America – Kentucky; Michael Burke, Commonwealth Office of Technology; Tony Helton, Goodwill Industries of Northern Kentucky; and Ron Murphy, Office of Employment and Training prepare the food for transport to distribution sites by Thanksgiving.

One of the recipients of the food was a family who moved to Kentucky in 2006 after a devastating house fire that claimed all of their belongings. Among the items loss in the fire were the honorable discharge papers received from the U.S. Navy.

The family continued to endure hardship after hardship. Then, Wendell Hamilton with Volunteers of America, Kentucky, contacted the family and asked them to pick up some items from his office. The family was shocked and brought to tears when he handed them two large boxes full of various grocery products. He had also taken the time to find all of the military records that were lost in the fire.

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Perry County JobSight helps Iraq (continued)

partners in the JobSight workforce center - benefits and services that could help him with his transition into life outside the military.

Chris worked with state and national Veterans Affairs representatives to help Jason apply for disability benefits due to his combat-related injuries and post-traumatic stress disorder. Chris also contacted the non-profit Volunteers of America organization and was able to help obtain funding that allowed Jason to move into rental housing of his own and even paid his first month's rent and electric bill.



Iraq veteran Jason Combs (right) stands outside the Perry County JobSight workforce center beside Chris Ward, a Local Veterans Employment Representative with the Kentucky Office for Employment and Training (OET), a key partner in the JobSight network.

Looking at career options, Chris helped Jason discover that he was eligible for assistance from the Kentucky Office of Vocational Rehabilitation and the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Dislocated Worker Program that would have

helped him enroll in vocational classes and train to become a heating and air-conditioning technician.

Although Jason was grateful for that opportunity, the training option quickly became his “Plan B” when a family member offered to provide the financial backing that would enable him to buy a liquid waste disposal truck and launch his own septic tank pumping service. It was a chance to revive a career plan he had years ago.

“I explained this idea to Chris, and he immediately said that there were people out there who could help me,” Jason says. “I got the truck with my uncle’s help, but Chris helped me get everything else set up because you can’t just have a truck and start going out and pumping raw sewage.”

Through Chris, Jason contacted the Small Business Administration, which helped him create a business model, draft a working business plan, and secure the appropriate permits and partial start-up funding necessary to turn his idea into reality. That connection led in turn to Jason’s getting further assistance with his business plan from Larry Parke, an associate professor in business management at the Hindman Campus of Hazard Community and Technical College.

“It’s one of the best business plans I’ve ever seen,” Chris says, adding he currently is helping Jason look for grants to help cover additional business expenses.

The inter-agency cooperation that helped Jason re-enter the workforce personifies the “one-stop” concept that powers JobSight, according to Jack Duff. Duff manages the Perry County JobSight, one of four one-stop workforce centers in the JobSight network administered by the Eastern Kentucky Concentrated Employment Program, Inc. (EKCEP).

“Jason came in here looking for only one service and we were able to direct him to a full complement of services and programs that helped him, without him even having to leave the building,” Duff says.

See Page 4: Perry County JobSight helps Iraq Veteran

Adopted veterans get visit from St. Nick and the Henderson Office of Employment and Training's Angel Tree for Christmas *by Kim Brannock,*

Education Cabinet

Staff members of the Henderson Office of Employment and Training (OET) made Christmas merry and bright for local veterans in assisted living homes and nursing homes with the help of local angels. About 70 veterans received a visit from St. Nick Dec. 22 when OET employees distributed gifts from the Henderson OET Veterans' Angel Tree.

Art Hayden, local veterans employment representative at OET's Henderson office, said all of the veterans on the Veterans' Angel Tree were adopted and more than \$950 was donated by the community for the project. All donations went toward gifts for the veterans.



Art Hayden, local veteran employment representative, decorated the Henderson OET Veterans' Angel Tree for military veterans living in local residential facilities. Staff members decorated the patriotic-themed Christmas tree with flags from all of the armed forces and ornaments with the names of veterans and a gift request. OET staff delivered the gifts donated by local angels to the adopted veterans at local assisted living homes Dec. 22.

See Page 5: Adopted veterans get visit

Perry County JobSight helps Iraq (continued)

"Agencies working together to help a person start a new career and life is what JobSight is all about."

Based in Hazard, EKCEP is a federally funded non-profit agency that administers the JobSight network in 23 eastern Kentucky counties. At JobSight one-stop workforce centers, job seekers and employers can access over a dozen state and federal employment and training programs and employer services in a single location.

Once he started his "All-Purpose Septic Service" with JobSight assistance, Jason wasted no time building a growing base of clients in Perry, Knott, and Letcher counties, he says. He has since purchased a second pumping truck and is eyeing a third, and says his plans include continued expanding and adding portable toilet rentals and cleaning to his business.

The cycle of success is paying off for Jason and JobSight. Chris says he plans to refer another of his customers—a veteran from Texas who recently relocated to eastern Kentucky—to Jason for employment while he completes WIA-funded vocational training.

"Jason has made a 180-degree turnaround, and it was fun watching the smile return to his face," Chris says. "But he's the one who has overcome all of these obstacles; all we had to do at JobSight was help provide him with the necessary means and access to partner programs to help him do that."

Jason says his JobSight experience has had an even deeper impact on his life than just his business success.

"I learned that veterans do have a future in America," Jason says. "Once I got on my feet again and got all of this started, I got my pride back up and things are looking good."

For additional information on the array of services available to veterans, job seekers, and employers at JobSight, contact Jack Duff at 606-436-3161, or visit www.jobsight.org.

Thankful for angels (continued)

instantly killed the 10 other GIs who were close by him in Saarlautern, Germany. His comrades never made a sound, Chancellor recalls with tears in his eyes and a lump in his throat.

"There was absolute silence," whispered the Corydon native, who now resides at Colonial Assisted Living with his prized guitars, sound equipment and a picture frame filled with medals awarded the young soldier who came perilously close to joining his fallen friends in death.

Those symbols of valor include a Purple Heart, Bronze Star, Combat Infantry Badge and two medals awarded him by a grateful French government. "My outfit helped liberate the town of Metz, France," Chancellor explained.

He also has a letter of commendation signed by Gen. George S. Patton, and jagged pieces of the shrapnel that were dug from his body after he was hit in nine places. That exploding artillery shell left him with the lower portion of his right leg forever paralyzed, and a piece tore through the exact middle of his right hand, rearranging the placement of his fingers.

A few days after that event, which occurred six months after he had reached the European arena of the war, he was flown to England where he was treated in three hospitals. Then he was sent home to the U.S., where he was cared for in three additional hospitals. There were numerous surgeries.

His time with the machine gun squad of the Army's 95th Infantry Division, Co. D of the 379th Infantry had come to an abrupt and painful end, but he has no bitterness. He has, however, wondered "thousands of times" why he was spared and the others taken.

The middle son of sharecroppers Holbert and Mae Chancellor was a freshman at Murray College when he received his draft notice. He'd hitch-hiked to Murray with only \$2 in his pocket, and studied under the National Youth Administration Program for individuals who couldn't otherwise afford

college. He went to classes half of each day and worked the other half of the day.

Chancellor, who never married "but came close a time or two," was ready to serve his country. "We knew if we lost that war, we'd lost everything. The enemy would be here."

After returning to Henderson County, where his younger brother Elmer still resides, he had a Pringle Street business called Charlie's Small Engine Service and operated that service for decades.

He has some family and friends who always remember him at Christmas, but the gifts he received from "an angel" who took his name from last year's first local Veterans Angel Tree touched his heart. He's aware that some veterans in Tri-county residential facilities have no family, and is glad to know they're receiving something via the Angel Tree.

"I think it's a really good idea," he said.

Adopted veterans get visit (continued)

"I think the community really loved it. Some of them have veterans in their families and they're glad to see them get recognition," he said.

The Henderson OET Veterans' Angel Tree grew from 47 names its first year in 2005 to 70 names this year. Veterans from eight assisted living and nursing homes in Henderson, Union and Webster counties were adopted by local angels who wanted to honor them for their service. Hayden said the Veterans' Angel Tree is also a good way to get the word out that OET has special services to help area veterans find employment.

"We want to thank the community for seeing the need to honor our veterans. It's been a great success because of the generosity of the community and we hope to do it again next year," Hayden said.

Northern Kentucky building base for annual fair

The Northern Kentucky One-Stop, St. Luke Hospital, Goodwill, and National Business College will host what is expected to be one of the largest job fairs in Northern Kentucky on March 22, 2007, at the American Legion Post in Latonia.

In October 2006, the Northern Kentucky One-Stop began holding a series of monthly mini-job fairs at one of its sites located at 320 Garrard St. in Covington. In addition to providing valuable services now, the mini fairs, which are scheduled throughout 2007, are expected to help build a base for the second annual Northern Kentucky Veterans Job Fair.



Mini-job fairs being conducted on a monthly basis are expected to build a base for the Northern Kentucky Veterans Job Fair to be held March 22, 2007.

The 2007 annual job fair is being planned for 62 employers and service organizations and 500 job seekers. Twelve work stations for preparing resumes also are part of the plan.

For more information regarding the mini fairs or the 2007 annual job fair, contact Tom Schweinzger, OET veteran representative, by phone at (859) 292-6666, ext. 226.

Madisonville blankets veterans

On Dec. 20, OET Madisonville Manager Debra Howard and Local Veteran Employment Representative Casie Richardson visited NHC Nursing Home. On behalf of the Madisonville OET staff, blankets were presented to four veterans with their name and branch of service embroidered on them.



Receiving personalized blankets from the Madisonville OET are, seated left to right, Ellis Hill, Army; Jessie Murphy, Navy; Orlando Servidio, Army; and Charles Franklin, Army. Standing left to right are Madisonville OET Manager Debbie Howard and Local Veterans Employment Representative Casie Richardson.

Howard said, "It proved to be very rewarding to see the faces of these veterans and let them know how much they are appreciated for their service to our country."



2006 Northern Kentucky Homeless Vet Stand Down

Tom Schweinzger, Mike Fry, Rob Walker and Ken Woher, veteran staff with the Northern Kentucky One-Stop, participated in the sixth annual Homeless Stand Down sponsored by Goodwill held at the Bellevue Vets Club on Oct. 20. Homeless veterans came from the Northern Kentucky area to participate in a day of rest and relaxation.

Over 400 individuals were able to receive medical care and exams. Many community organizations came together to provide services to the vets. National College brought their graduating certified medical assistants to do blood pressure checks while Veteran Affairs was doing cholesterol checks.

The Bellevue Vets Club fed participants a hot meal and provided a warm place for the day.

Students from the local Catholic school, Saint Michaels, carried trays for all the veterans to their tables and talked with them about their military service.

“The vets were eager to share their ‘war stories’ with one another. Many games of chess and dominoes could be observed being played throughout the day. Some stimulating conversations could also be heard comparing the ‘current war’ with ‘their war,’” Schweinzger said.

Security and traffic control was provided by Lt. Col. Steve Weber and his Ohio Army Guard Military Police unit. “Traffic control was very important,” Schweinzger said, “because the location of the event was on the main thoroughfare of the town and at the beginning of a very popular entertainment and dining area.”

Northern Kentucky veterans information booths open

The Northern Kentucky veteran representatives recently opened veteran information booths in several one-stop locations.

The booths having been in the preparation stages for some time, the Covington office booth started with a small collection of military patches. Today there are about 60 patches from the Army, Navy and Air Force and the collection is still growing. Also displayed are leaflets dropped during the first Iraqi war as well as two silhouettes from the local Army recruiter’s station.



The Covington and Florence locations of the Northern Kentucky One-Stop recently opened veteran information booths. Veterans can use the information at their leisure without having to wait for assistance.

One wall in Covington is dedicated to the Medal of Honor winners associated with Northern Kentucky. According to Tom Schweinzger, OET veteran representative, “There are 3,460 individuals who have received the Medal of Honor, two have been awarded in the last year. Recipients range from those in the Civil War to the Vietnam War. One person received the medal during peace time. The youngest recipient was from Campbell County and received the medal at 15 years old.”

See Page 8: Northern Kentucky Information Booths

Educating our future



In November, Henderson Local Veteran Employment Representative Art Hayden was a guest speaker at South Heights Elementary School where he gave a classroom presentation on the significance of Veterans Day.

Left to right, South Height Elementary School students Zachary Laughary, Justin Asher, Andrew Gettings, Taylor-Ann McAtee, and Ethan Gaines participate in a presentation by Arthur Hayden about the importance of Veterans Day. The students were challenged to research their family history for veterans and thank them for their sacrifice and our freedoms.

OET helps feed homeless veterans (continued)

The family couldn't believe or understand how complete strangers knew that they needed these gifts.

In a letter to the Volunteers of America, the family said, "This letter is for everyone and anyone involved in helping our family and/or other families who are in situations similar to ours. Please keep doing what you are doing...it does make a difference. We wholeheartedly thank you."

HVRP is operated through a grant from DOL/VETS and is administered in Kentucky by the Volunteers of America, Inc. and Goodwill Industries.

Northern Kentucky Information Booths (continued)

The Covington and Florence booths have information from local colleges, companies and military recruiters. There is also information on Veteran Affairs benefits that is available and services offered in the one-stop offices. The booths are open for any veteran to sit, relax and look at the information without having to wait for assistance.

The next project to be undertaken is to provide information to veterans on becoming pen pals to those stationed overseas or in combat zones.

Anyone with ideas or items to donate should contact Schweinzger by phone at (859) 292-6666, ext. 226 or by e-mail at ThomasA.Schweinzger@ky.gov.



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Corline Schnitzen

275 East Main Street, 2 – WB,
Frankfort, KY 40621

Telephone 502/564-3752, Fax 502/564-7452

E-mail CorlineE.Schnitzen@ky.gov